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ABSTRACT

This volume is intended to help secondary school principals see more clearly how they can strengthen the vocational programs in their schools by supporting vocational student organizations (VSOs). The eight major national organizations are described, and their addresses are provided. Ways in which administrators can provide organizational, instructional, and administrative support are recommended to help VSOs promote a positive student attitude toward the world of work, develop effective communication and leadership skills, and promote civic consciousness. Suggestions are offered for some forms that assistance can take in each of the three areas. Brief descriptions follow of the activities of a number of VSOs in various occupational fields. They illustrate ways in which these clubs help their members to learn and practice the skills and attitudes they need for successful participation in the world of work. (YLB)

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# The Principal and Vocational Student Organizations

Business and industry continue to ask that vocational education programs in secondary schools send them entry-level employees who not only have well-developed technical skills in their chosen occupational fields, but who also have the attitudes essential to success on any job, including the ability and willingness to work cooperatively with fellow employees and at least minimum leadership skills.

Of course, all aspects of a carefully designed vocational education curriculum contribute to the development of these goals, but many vocational instructors use the vocational student organizations (VSO) related to their occupational specialty to promote leadership and other participatory skills.

High school principals and curriculum planners are frequently unaware of the instructional values that vocation-related student organizations have for young people majoring in the vocational education areas offered by their schools.

VSOs differ from other student organizations in one major way: Vocational student organizations are designed to play a planned, integral role in the curriculum of a particular vocational field, in much the same way as do laboratory activities in science courses. VSOs are not intended to be voluntary cocurricular activities.

Perhaps because of this distinguishing characteristic, vocational student organizations are frequently not mentioned in discussions of student activities in secondary schools. Therefore, this *Curriculum Report* should help principals see more clearly how they can strengthen the vocational programs in their schools by supporting VSOs.

## What and Who They Are

The eight major national organizations are described below:

- Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). P.O. Box 3000, Leesburg, Va. 22075. VICA, founded in 1965, serves students enrolled in trade, industrial, and technical education programs at the high school and postsecondary levels. In some states, VICA also serves students in health occupations programs. (See HOSA.)

Some of the many areas represented in VICA are auto mechanics, cosmetology, drafting, auto body repair, carpentry, printing, and the machine trades.

- Future Farmers of America (FFA). P.O. Box 15160, Alexandria, Va. 22309. FFA was the first of the vocational student organizations to be set up on a national basis. Founded in 1928, the membership of this group includes students in agriculture and agribusiness programs such as farm mechanics, horticulture, and production agriculture.
- Health Occupations Student Association (HOSA). 4300 Highline Blvd., Suite 212D, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73108. Started in 1978, HOSA chapters enroll young people in health fields such as medical assistants, dental assistants, nurse assistants, and medical laboratory workers.
- American Industrial Arts Student Association (AIASA). 1910 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091. AIASA, established in 1978 for students concentrating in industrial arts and technology education, has chapters in elementary, middle level, junior high, and senior high schools.
- Future Homemakers of America Home Economics Related Occupations (FHA HERO). 1910 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091. Established in 1945, this group of student organizations enrolls young people in home economics courses who strive for careers in such fields as child care and commercial foods. HERO was set up in 1968 as a part of FHA, so the total organization is typically referred to as FHA HERO.

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- Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA). 1908 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091. DECA, founded in 1947, serves high school and post-high school level students enrolled in marketing education programs. A majority of its members are found in cooperative education programs in the marketing, distribution, and sales fields, with a chapter in practically every high school that offers DE courses.
- Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). P.O. Box 17417-Dulles, Washington, D.C. 20041. Organized in 1946, FBLA's purpose is to serve secondary school students in general business and office programs, along with those in other business-related fields. Examples of general business programs are general office education, general business, basic business skills, and typing. (See OEA.)
- Office Education Association (OEA). 5454 Cleveland Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43229. OEA has chapters in both secondary and postsecondary schools, and was established in 1966 to supplement offerings in vocational business and office programs such as secretarial science, data processing, computer services, and accounting.

## How Administrators Can Help

Administrators can provide support in three main areas to assist VSOs to promote a positive student attitude toward the world of work, develop effective communication and leadership skills, and promote civic consciousness: organizational support, instructional support, and administrative support.

*Organizational Support.* Organizational support means assisting with both the initial organization and the ongoing development of a vocational student organization. Some of the forms that assistance can take are:

- *Ensuring that the VSO has a viable club constitution and bylaws.* A VSO must adopt a constitution and establish bylaws, for these detail the operational basis of the group, including purposes, membership criteria, finances, committees, and so on.

The VSO structure can take a variety of forms, so the administrator's role is to help students and advisers create rules and regulations that are appropriate to the particular setting. In this regard, a principal can often make a significant contribution in the early days of an organization's life by discouraging excessive attention to the minutiae of constitutional matters.

The national offices of the various VSOs are rich sources of materials and advice about establishing and operating an organization.

- *Ensuring that the VSO has an effective membership campaign.* In many vocational fields, belonging to the related VSO may be taken for granted; a membership drive may seem unnecessary. But at the least, there are always students new to the program who should be informed about it. A well-planned membership campaign can be a useful review of the club's reason for being.
- *Ensuring that the organization's officers are elected properly and that they are trained for their duties.* Election dates and pre-election activities should be well-publicized to emphasize the importance of VSOs, since vocational programs on the whole are often undervalued and/or misunderstood by those not involved in them.

Where there are several VSOs in a school, coordinating the election process for all of them ought to be considered. Among other things, this will help to remind the student body as a whole of the activities of this special group of student organizations.

Most of the national offices recommend procedures for a formal installation of local chapter officers as a way of underlining the importance of their positions and duties.

The principal can help arrange for the ceremony by making the necessary arrangements for the use of the school building and soliciting the help of other staff members.

But without some guidance and training, a year in office can be a disastrous experience for both officer and club. Although the organization of groups varies, the officer's duties are similar enough to justify an "officers' training school" for all student organizations. The principal can endorse and coordinate this activity, which may even offer academic credit.

In addition, the principal can help to make available to advisers and organization officers, an accountant from the community, the secretary to the school board, etc., to work with student officers.

- *Ensuring that the VSO has an aggressive program of work.* The program of work outlines the goals of the organization for the school year and the specific activities it intends to initiate and carry out during the membership year.

A well-planned program not only provides students with leadership and other developmental activities, but can also bring public recognition to the school.

Some out-of-class activities drift along, guided more by custom or indifference than by plan and purpose. The VSO faculty adviser should assist officers and other members to set up a challenging and constructive series of activities. The high school principal should know what activities the VSO is projecting and make sure they are consistent with the school's philosophy and acceptable to the community. The principal must also be ready to step in if a VSO has difficulties drafting and carrying out a plan of worthwhile activities.

- *Ensuring that the club has prepared a calendar of events.* Preparing a calendar of club activities naturally follows once a program of work is established. However, creating a calendar calls for more than just selecting dates.

*The high school principal should know what activities the VSO is projecting....*

Attention must also be given to factors such as the availability of students; the availability of outside speakers and other community participants; time and travel if the activity is away from the school campus; and permissions that may be needed.

- *Ensuring that the VSO has a budget.* The administrator's role in the budget-making process is to be certain that the VSO develops a realistic projection of income and expenses. Central office review is especially important with respect to estimates of income and fund raising.

In addition to deciding how funds are to be obtained, the club must have proper record-keeping and accounting procedures. Here, the principal can help by offering advice and making the supervision of the school's accounting office available to the VSO treasurer. (In some states, the finances of all VSOs are included in the school's account-

ing system and are subject to the same professional auditing.)

- *Assisting with the scheduling and planning of VSO meetings.* The majority of VSO activities will take place at the local level, and of these, none is more important than the VSO meeting, which may involve members of one VSO, two or three related groups, or the entire school. Regardless, careful planning is essential, and the administrator should keep in touch to assess the value and structure of a group's meetings and to offer advice and resource assistance when needed.
- *Assisting with the planning of overnight activities.* One of the great attractions and sources of educational value for students in an active and well-run VSO are the opportunities to participate in district, state, and national conferences that require off-campus, overnight trips.

But no other VSO activity can do more damage to the group's standing in the school and community than a poorly planned and executed travel project.

Because almost every high school has some type of student activities that take pupils off campus, most will have published rules and regulations guiding student conduct and advisories for faculty sponsors.

Experienced VSO sponsors and administrators may have developed their own rules of student conduct and preparatory activities for such trips. Here are a few:

- Inform parents and students of the conference location, purpose, emergency phone numbers, schedules, amount of spending money needed, etc.
- Require signed parental approval notes for all participants
- Prepare a contract covering conduct and other obligations to be signed by all participants and be certain students have a copy
- Have a dress code for each type of organization activity and require members to adhere to it
- Require students to remain on the conference site and keep advisers informed of their whereabouts
- Prohibit all alcohol and non-prescription drugs
- Require advisers to be available at all times and exhibit exemplary conduct.

- *Attending VSO meetings and other club activities.* Attending or otherwise taking public note of vocational student organization meetings and other activities is a significant gesture of support by the administration.

Taking time to attend an occasional business session of the VSO, stopping by a car wash, arranging to attend a regional or state conference, and sending thank-you notes to the club and adviser in recognition of a worthwhile project will let the club sponsor and members know that you are aware of what the group is doing and support their efforts.

*Organizational Support.* Helping a student group to develop and successfully operate a sound organizational structure for itself is not the end of a principal's responsibility to the VSO.

VSO activities are intended to contribute to the curriculum of the vocational field with which it is related. It follows, then, that the principal's concern for the relevance and effectiveness of a club should be as substantial as his or her concerns for all other aspects of the school's instructional program.

But vocational student organizations require a special kind of support; the principal should assist the sponsor with the integration of VSO activities and training materials into the vocational course of the curriculum.

The idea of integration is the primary justification for a VSO, but accomplishing it can be difficult. The principal's background in curriculum-planning can be an essential source of professional support for the VSO's faculty adviser. Here are a few possibilities:

- *Making training available for instructors sponsors.* The most critical element in the development of viable VSOs is the training of teacher-sponsors. Vocational instructors are aware of the uses and values of vocational student organizations in preparing young people for the world of work, but a typical comment is, "What do I do about it?"

It is not the administrator's responsibility to show the club sponsor what and how, but the administrator can provide access to the needed inservice opportunities such as

*Administrators can assist with the development and strengthening of VSOs....*

institutes and workshops offered by the national and state offices of a particular VSO; inservice courses and special conferences locally and at universities; relevant curriculum materials prepared by the national VSO organization.

Sponsors who are new to this assignment are likely to be in special need of direction and support for a couple of years while they develop their own leadership skills. A beginner might be helped by a mentor or his or her own "faculty adviser" to go to for advice and support.

Bringing all VSO sponsors together at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the school year can be useful to both beginners and veterans.

- *Providing appropriate VSO instructional materials.* A key to maintaining an active VSO is having a full range of instructional materials available to teachers and students.

To this end, the principal can be supportive by making sure that the school's instructional budget includes adequate funds for this purpose. When requisitions for materials reach the office they should be handled expeditiously.

Instructional materials for a VSO should be as varied as those for a regular classroom. Videotaping of club activities for later critiquing and/or for training groups in later years will be worthwhile. And, although the occupational focus varies from one VSO to another, the sharing of productive procedures by exchanging tapes and putting on demonstrations will be valuable club "instructional materials."

The principal can be supportive by sharing with the club and sponsor relevant materials that reach his or her desk—not just those relating to occupations but the items bearing on organization, planning, and leadership.

- *Making sure that VSO members are receiving leadership training and experience.* A well-planned VSO program naturally provides opportunities for leadership experiences and for the development of group participation skills—characteristics businesses and industries prize in new employees. But young people need advice, instruction, evaluation, and evidence of support from adults to make those opportunities worthwhile.

The administrator should observe how sponsors provide developmental opportunities for students with a variety of abilities and discuss this aspect of their responsibilities with faculty advisers.

*Administrative Support.* Administrators can assist with the development and strengthening of VSOs as a significant feature of the school's vocational program and of student life. Some possibilities are:

- *Including VSO sponsorship responsibilities in all relevant job descriptions.* If a school is to have a strong VSO enterprise, the administrator must demonstrate clear commitment and support. By including sponsorship responsibilities in a job description, the administrator communicates positive support to students and faculty members.

Too many vocational instructors have discovered, at some point after they are hired, that they are to be responsible for running some kind of "club" in addition to teaching.

- *Reporting VSO activities to the superintendent and the board of education.* Active VSOs' community service projects, leadership conferences, field trips, industry-school cooperation, performance in competitive events, and related activities are of interest to board of education members. All school boards like to hear success stories, but they should also hear about the less spectacular activities, misadventures, and misfirings. Perhaps they can help.
- *Providing financial support.* The majority of funds available for VSO expenses are usually generated by dues and fundraisers. There are times, however, when the school's administration can and should support a VSO financially. On the principal's recommendation, the school system should consider paying advisers' dues to state and national VSO organizations; purchasing instructional materials; paying advisers' travel expenses to VSO activities; covering student travel expenses to selected VSO events; providing a stipend to all club advisers for the extra time they spend working on club affairs; and providing an annual lump-sum contribution to each VSO chapter to "seed" their treasuries.

A few school systems give their VSOs large enough allowances to make fundraising unnecessary and to keep members' dues at a minimum.

- *Making sure VSO activities get adequate public relations coverage.* Progressive schools operate an ongoing public relations campaign to which student vocational organizations can make substantial contributions, especially since so many of their activities are naturally public relations oriented.

The principal and his or her staff must see that VSO advisers are PR-conscious, but that they also follow school policies and procedures in making contact with the media about VSO events and accomplishments. Efforts to keep the community informed will help create a positive image for the club and for the school as a whole.

- *Including VSO involvement in instructor evaluation.* Teachers are asked and expected to do what is best for their students, which for many vocational instructors means making a personal and professional commitment to a student activity in addition to carrying a regular class schedule. Rarely, however, are their VSO involvements included in their annual evaluations.

One criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of vocational instructors serving as sponsors should be the quality of their work with a VSO group.

# Exempli Gratia

The following brief descriptions of the activities of a number of VSOs in various occupational fields illustrate the many ways in which these clubs help their members to learn and practice the skills and attitudes they need for successful participation in the world of work.

Programs like those described here could not have been designed and carried out effectively without the endorsement and ongoing support of the principals.

Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, Harwich, Mass. 02645. *Contact:* F. Timothy Carroll, principal.

As reported to the Cape Cod Technical School Committee at a meeting on May 8, 1986:

The Cape Cod Tech Chapter of the Future Farmers of America (FFA), which is the national organization for students of occupational agriculture, has won the award for the regional and state "Building Our American Communities" (BOAC) Project. The award is given to the school that best fulfills the following objectives:

- Gain an understanding of community development and involvement
- Acquire skills in community development
- Assist students in furthering the economic development of horticulture in the local community.

The project, which the students selected and completed for participation in the state contest, was the work project at Exchange Park in Harwich Center and involved removing the existing sod, regrading, repairing and adjusting the sprinkler system, laying a brick patio, removing diseased and damaged shrubs and trees and planting new ones, and fertilizing and spreading lime on the lawn area.

The work was completed by members of the junior class, who worked closely with the Society for the Preservation of Historic Harwiches and the Harwich Department of Parks and Recreation.

Arthur Smith, a junior from South Yarmouth, with Colin Leonard, the FFA adviser, will compete at the National Conference on Community Development in Washington, D.C., in September. The expenses for the trip to the national conference will be picked up by business organizations.

Owasso High School, Owasso, Okla. 74055. *Contact:* Charlotte Ford or Cynthia Michael.

The Interdisciplinary Cooperative Education VICA club at Owasso has a strong commitment to safety. As part of their VICA work program, they focus on occupational safety by ensuring that all club members are certified in CPR.

In addition, they participate in civil defense disaster drills and Red Cross drives. They have the highest percentage of participation among high schools in the Tulsa area.

The club's child safety programs have focused on bicycle, fire, bus, Halloween, and poison control safety issues and procedures. They have hosted seminars in conjunction with the Chemical Drug Abuse Program and have worked with law enforcement agencies by sponsoring seatbelt awareness programs, gun safety seminars, and tornado safety programs.

Washington County Career Center, Route 2, Marietta, Ohio 45750. *Contact:* Lisa Smith, OEA adviser.

Recently, members of the Office Education Association (OEA) at Washington County Career Center participated in a computer-based simulation, "An American Business Challenge," sponsored by Findlay (Ohio) College.

The simulation's purpose was to acquaint students with the economic and decision-making processes and problems faced by businesses in the United States.

The students were divided into small groups, each representing a business that assembles and sells automobiles. Each group made decisions about advertising their product, kept a record of their inventory, determined what they would charge for their cars, and made other judgments about situations their company might face.

The nine-week simulation covered a two-and-one-half year time span.

The student's decisions were recorded on input sheets and sent to the college for computer analysis. Printouts were then mailed to the Career Center for use in determining strategies for the next business interval.

Derry Area Senior High School, R.D. 1, Box 169, Derry, Pa. 15627. *Contact:* Kenneth B. Rhodes, FFA adviser.

The Derry Future Farmers of America is an element of the three-teacher agriculture production and horticulture curriculum in this comprehensive high school.

Among the club's activities is sponsorship every third year of a spring flower and fashion show. This show is produced in conjunction with the school's music department and involves many of the school's athletes as models. The event is held in early spring and previews the latest in prom fashions and flowers.

A highlight of the evening is a wedding party, complete with mock ceremony and a reception with punch and a wedding cake.

Overland High School, 12400 East Jewell Ave., Aurora, Colo. 80012. *Contact:* Gordon S. Young, AIASA adviser.

The following is an excerpt from a recent letter from Young about his AIASA organization's activities:

Overland was, and to my knowledge, may be the only affiliated chapter of the American Industrial Arts Student Association in Colorado. All of the students taking industrial arts/technology education at Overland are considered to be members of the chapter, though not all have elected to become active in the club. This year we have 34 active members and are still growing.

In the past, we have done a lot of different student-oriented activities, but this year we have decided to provide students with some exploratory activities beyond the classroom that will keep them abreast of industry and technology and at the same time give them a chance to communicate with others and still have a good time.

We have made plans to take part in the area's first Mouse Trap Derby, a competition sponsored by the Colorado Industrial Arts/Technology Association at the Colorado/Rocky Mountain States conference.

In addition, we are in the process of putting an Olympics of the Mind team together and plan to compete in OM events. We also have plans for the students to build a robot that demonstrates the use of mechanical, pneumatic, and hydraulic mechanisms. As are the other two, this is a planned group activity in which, we hope, we can draw from each student his or her own expertise and input.

These activities offer many exciting and educational opportunities for our students, but we have decided to add to these by providing a chance for some spiritual and personal growth as well.

We plan to teach technology and provide some community service by building toys for a local day care center and the Denver Children's Hospital as a mass production operation. This way, we can give our students experience with community involvement and also expose them to materials and processing in a creative sort of way.

Alamogordo Senior High School, 103 Cuba Ave., Alamogordo, N. Mex. 88310. *Contact:* Marsha Pattison, FHA/HERO adviser.

FHA/HERO is an organization designed to help students realize that they can make a difference in their personal, family, and community relationships. Students plan and then lead all activities.

Home economics education is used in all facets of FHA HERO and enables students to identify needs and concerns they may want to address as club projects. Examples of FHA/HERO projects and activities in the school are:

- Child development co-op students work in day care centers, preschools, and elementary schools as teacher aides for two or three hours a day and receive high school credit. They work with individual children, with small groups, and finally, as more skill is acquired, as teachers of specific units. (HERO)
- Restaurant management students operate an in-school restaurant for teachers two days each week and receive school credit. They rotate employee/management positions and practice their food service skills. (HERO)
- FHA activities have included an "Adopt a Grandparent" program; "Eat Breakfast" promotions; nutrition and fitness workshops; legislative coffees; Students Against Drunk Driving and Childfind activities in school and community; and scholarships for students interested in further study in home economics-related occupations.

Lewisville High School, 1098 West Main St., Lewisville, Tex. 75067. *Contact:* Bette Sirianni, HOSA adviser.

At Lewisville High School, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) is a youth leadership organization composed this year of 20 health occupations co-op students and 25 health care science students.

Co-op students must be juniors or seniors and enrolled in three classes in addition to a co-op assignment where he or she is employed in a health-related job and works a minimum of 15 hours per week.

Health Care Science is an elective for 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students. These students are not employed, but their curriculum does include job-seeking skills and other requirements for entry into various health occupations.

HOSA provides opportunities for its members to develop leadership qualities by planning and carrying out well-rounded programs in the maintenance of wellness and the prevention and care of illness in their home, school, and community.

In keeping with this purpose, the club provided a blood pressure screening at an open house program this past September that was attended by 200-250 parents and faculty members. While assigned students took blood pres-

sures and gave guests a written record of their results, others answered questions about HOSA and served as guides.

Juneau Douglas High School, 10014 Crazy Horse Dr., Juneau, Alaska 99801. *Contact:* Mike Herold, DECA adviser.

At Juneau High School (enrollment 1,200), the 50 members of the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) chapter operate the hot lunch program and the school store. During the two lunch periods, Distributive Education Z students (DECA members) sell hot sandwiches and other lunch items.

Students are responsible for ordering supplies, controlling inventory, preparing and serving the food, and keeping all related records. The entire lunch program is self-supporting; no state or federal funds are used.

The students use the profits to support DECA activities such as sending students to the Western Regional DECA Leadership Conference and to the Alaska State DECA Conference.

The Juneau Douglas DECA chapter also manages the school store and has created a "turnkey" store rental program. The DECA students rent the stocked store to other school groups who then operate it during various activities.

After the event, the DECA members restock the store and make a record of all items sold. The renting group is credited for the amount of sales minus a 10 percent restocking fee and the rental fee.

Last year, using the profits made on the lunch program and the store rental, the DECA chapter donated $40,000 to various activities at the high school.

In Alaska, DECA is one of four vocational student leadership organizations that work together to accomplish many of their goals. For instance, each June, DECA, FHA HERO, OEA, and VICA hold a joint leadership and competitive events conference where time is divided between work sessions for officers of each group and total-group workshops and discussion sessions.

These workshops and discussion sessions address such topics as group problem solving, group goal setting, effective meetings, and public speaking. These and other joint projects are conducted under the supervision of Kathleen Castle, program manager, Alaska Student Leadership Project, Northern Institute, Anchorage, Alaska 99502.

## KUDOS

This *Curriculum Report* was developed by Richard L. Sullivan, professor, Central State University, Edmond, Okla.; and Jerry L. Wircenski, professor, North Texas State University, Denton, Tex. The help of the contacts mentioned was essential and is much appreciated.

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